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ABSTRACT

This article discusses various facets of language education. The first section provides a brief historical sketch of second and foreign language education. The second section discusses directions in the internationalization of education in general, and section 3 focuses on recent trends in alternatives to traditional national school systems and briefly discusses some of the most prominent ways of coping with the growing internationalization of modern life (i.e., international schools, language immersion, and content-based language teaching). Section 4 highlights developments in Finland concerning the integration of language and content instruction. (Contains 2 references.) (CK)

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DEVELOPING LANGUAGE TEACHING IN FINLAND: WHERE DOES CONTENT-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING FIT?

(Presentation at the orientation seminar of the first national TCE Programme, April 4, 1992)

1. Brief historical sketch

Education in a second or foreign language is not a new phenomenon. Similarly, bilingualism and multilingualism have undoubtedly existed at all times whenever different language groups have been in contact with each other. In the Western world, systematic language teaching as well as teaching in a foreign language started in ancient Rome. When the expansion of the Roman empire made Greece dependent on Rome (c. 200-80 B.C.), many learned Greeks became tutors to the children of Roman nobility, either as slaves or in a freer position. Rome generally recognized the superiority of Greek culture and learning fluent Greek was considered a mark of an educated person. Greek tutors often spoke only Greek, and thus the form of teaching resembled immersion teaching or content-based teaching.

When the school system was developed in Rome, learning Greek and studying Greek literature was an essential part of the curriculum. It was also common for noble young men to be sent to Greece to finish their education in famous Greek schools. Thus, student exchange and study abroad are not new things either. They were there from the very beginning of organized instruction in the west.

It is also common knowledge that dozens of generations in medieval times went to school and university where the language of instruction was Latin. For centuries, Latin was the lingua franca of the church, the state, the school, research and high culture in general. It was common practice to punish children if they were caught speaking some other language than Latin.

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With the emergence of the nation state and a growing sense of nationalism, and as primary education, "popular education" began its slow expansion, education in the mother tongue became more common and books began to be printed in the vernacular. However, the standard language was often the language of the capital region and many children spoke a marked dialect. In several bilingual or multilingual countries the vernacular language was not their first language, their home language.

Doing most of one's studies in a second/foreign language has long roots in former colonies. The educational systems in some of these new states still resemble to a smaller or greater extent those in their former imperial centres in terms of curricula, teaching traditions, textbooks and examinations. Study abroad is still a very common pattern.

Universities are a fairly recent institution in several parts of the world. Thus, for instance, in medieval Finland, it was common for young men to go abroad and study in the famous European universities on the Continent. This was, in fact, so common throughout Europe that students from a given nationality banded together to be better able to look after their interests. This led to the formation of the "nations" system, which we in Finland now recognize in the rather moribund regionally-based student organizations at universities (Finnish: osakunta, Swedish: nation).

The language of research literature has always tended to be international, first Latin and in more recent times increasingly English.

Educational institutions have, indeed, long and interesting roots.

On the basis of the above discussion we can conclude that teaching/-learning in a second/foreign language and the use of foreign languages in research publications are no recent phenomena. In fact, in a historical perspective, such practices have been the norm rather than an exception.

Since the non-use of the pupils' vernacular has typically involved political, enonomic, social and cultural hegemony - or indeed systematic oppression - it is understandable that education in the vernacular has been considered important and its large-scale implementation an important achievement. The national language and culture in the national language have typically been closely linked with nation-building and a sense of nationhood.

In Finland, equal right to public education in one's mother tongue was codified in Finland's constitutional instruments during the first years of independence. A UNESCO conference in 1953 (The Use of Vernacular

Language in Education) recommended this system very strongly. It seems likely that this question will remain on the agenda of all minorities throughout the world.

2. Directions in internationalization of education in general

There has been quite intensive activity throughout the world aimed at promoting international awareness and mutual understanding. However, this activity has not necessarily consciously tried to integrate the goals of international orientation and language learning. Among the best known concepts/movements are:

* International Education
* Education for International Understanding (and Peace)
* Multicultural education
* Area Studies
* Global studies
* Associated Schools
* Education for Global Awareness
* Education for Interdependence
* Education for Global Interdependence
* Youth for Understanding

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* ERASMUS
* COMETT
* LINGUA

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* NORDPLUS

3. Recent trends in alternatives to traditional national school systems

Since World War II, in particular, international relations have intensified dramatically in all spheres of life. Goods, services, capital, people and cultural influences have all spread across national borders more and more rapidly and to an evergrowing degree, in spite of all bureaucratic, and protectionist barriers.

In comparison to the earlier situation, where all sorts of geographic and cultural peripheries had no choice in adapting to the languages and cultures of centres, countries are now actively trying to compete in the international market place and seeking ways of coping successfully. One of the basic requirements is sufficient skills in the languages that form the hard currency of that international market. The needs of language teaching and learning vary considerably from country to country, and therefore countries understandably have made different arrangements. However, all countries face the problem of being able to participate in the intensifying international exchange.

This has led to several interesting new developments the purpose of which has been to improve the often unsatisfactory standard of language skills, even after years of systematic teaching and learning. Traditional language teaching fails almost totally with a small percentage of pupils. Formal language teaching and learning in its present form produces modest results with the majority of students. While this modest level of achievement at schools is not, by any means, limited to language learning, there is every reason to seek ways of improving the situation. A lot can be achieved by methods of teaching that build on what we know of effective learning. This is, however, not enough. When we hope to achieve real communicative proficiency, the number of lessons in traditional teaching - a few hours a week - is simply too little. We need to increase the number of opportunities for pupils to be actively engaged in meaningful contacts with second/foreign languages.

The most interesting and promising approaches in developing real communicative proficiency in a foreign language all share the view that real communicative overall proficiency can be achieved only by increasing meaningful contacts with the studied language dramatically. There are several ways of doing this.

It might be worth pointing out that whatever arrangements are made to improve skills in a second language or in one or more foreign languages, it would be courting trouble to ignore the legitimate questions that have to do with the status and fate of people's first language. This is an especially sensitive issue for all minorities, whatever the basis for being considered a minority. Nothing should be done to weaken - or even seem to weaken - the position of any languages and linguistic groups. It is up to anyone advocating arrangements that mean giving second/foreign languages a boost to be able to show convincingly that other languages do not suffer. To date, there is no evidence that modern systems would have a negative effect on pupils' first language.

I will now give a brief account of some of the most prominent ways of coping with the growing internationalization of modern life.

3.1. International Schools

Gaby Kohl (1991) has made a study of what she calls the international school system. The following presentation is largely based on her recent article.

Growing internationalization of economic, political and social relations have contributed to a notable increase in the number of international schools that cater for the educational needs of the children of highly mobile parents.

Among the first truly international schools in modern times were the International School of Geneva (École International de Genève/Ecolint) and the United Nations International School (UNIS), set up in 1924 and in 1947, respectively.
Since then, a variety of internationally oriented school types have developed:

1) International Schools proper

E.g. in Germany there are such 'genuinely' international schools in Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Munich, with Stuttgart and Berlin schools in the process of being set up.

2) Internationally oriented schools

Typical of schools of this type are United World Colleges, which seek to promote international awareness. Such colleges exist in Wales (UWC of the Atlantic), Singapore, Canada, Swaziland, Italy, USA, and Venezuela. Students attending such colleges usually take the International Baccalaurate examination.

3) Private international schools

Several schools of this types can be found especially in Switzerland.

4) Overseas schools

Schools of this type are usually set up to cater for the educational needs of the children and youth of particular nationalities. There are Deutsche Schulen, French Lycées, Japanese schools, British schools etc.

5) Embassy schools

Embassy schools are a particular form of overseas schools.

6) Army schools

"Big Powers" with sizeable military troops abroad have set up schools for the education of dependents. Examples of this type of schools are British Service Schools, Department of Defence Dependent Schools (DODDS), and NATO-related schools like the SHAPE International School in Belgium with more than 2500 students.

7) National schools with international sections/complements

Examples of this kind of schools are UNESCO Project Schools, and the new Finnish IB schools

8) European schools

These schools have been set up in the EEC countries: Luxembourg, Brussels, Varese (Italy), Mol (Belgium), Karlsruhe, Bergen (Netherlands), Munich, Culham (UK). A special objective of these schools is education for European awareness. Instruction is given in seven member languages (Language I). In addition, from grade 3 onwards, children are taught geography and history in three "complementary" languages (English, German and French).

9) Bilingual/bicultural schools

These schools are committed to promoting two languages and cultures. Such schools are e.g. John F. Kennedy School in Berlin and École Active Bilingue.

10) Company schools

Companies like Philips and Shell support schools for the children of their employees. Philips has a Regional International School in Eindhoven and Shell has several Royal Dutch Shell Schools worldwide.

11) Missionary schools

Most schools of this type are located in developing countries and are typically denominational. Some have developed into international schools.

Statistics on international schools

Period of founding	Number	%
Before 1859	2	1,3
1860-1869	1	0,6
1870-1879	2	1,3
1880-1889	5	3,2
1890-1899	6	3,8
1900-1909	3	1,9
1910-1919	2	1,3
1920-1929	7	4,5
1930-1939	4	2,6
1940-1949	8	5,1
1950-1959	25	16,0
1960-1969	41	26,3
1970-1979	34	21,8
1980-1989	16	10,3
Total	152	100,0

Region	Number/ schools	Number/ students
Africa	180	81 249
Asia	117	48 173
Australia	34	10 708
Europe	242	93 837
North America	35	16 804
South America	120	79 481
Total	728	330 252

Almost one third of these schools (28,2%) offer the International Baccalaureate alone or together with some other certificate.

3.2. Language Immersion

Since there will be several speakers addressing the topic of immersion, it will be sufficient to say that, like so many innovative ideas in language teaching, the initiative was taken in Canada.

Parents and children representing the strong majority language have considered their home language so strong that giving the second language a much stronger role in education would not weaken the pupils' first language nor lower the standards in learning other school subjects. Large-scale immersion seems to be especially suitable in such a situation where the language majority enjoys a strong position. There are several varieties of immersion: total/partial, early/late.

The objectives of the immersion programmes are generally considered to be as follows:
a) to give the pupils participating in the programme a functional oral and written proficiency in a second/foreign language
b) to promote and maintain normal progress in the first language
c) to guarantee the standard of knowledge in other subjects that is expected in "traditional" instruction
d) to help pupils understand and appreciate the linguistic group whose language is the immersion programme language as well as its culture without in any way weakening the pupils' identification with their own home language, their own cultural background or their appeciation of them.

The immersion language is used as the language of instruction, for interaction, for teaching content knowledge so as to make their skills resemble skills in L1.

3.3. Content-based language teaching

The starting point of content-based language teaching, like that of the immersion approach, is based on recent research on language acquisition and bilingualism and on recent theories of language acquisition and learning.

There are several types of content-based language teaching, but since they will be discussed in other talks, I will only briefly say that content-based teaching generally seeks to integrate the goals of content learning and language learning. Unlike traditional language teaching, linguistic content

is determined by subject content. Thus traditional language progression plays a much smaller role in the syllabus organization.

It is my personal impression, at this point, that there are ways of effecting a sensible compromise between subject matter goals and language teaching goals. By carefully selecting what content to teach to young children, it would seem to me possible to, in fact, follow a rather traditional linguistic progression. I have elsewhere sketched this theme. Even very preliminary reflection seemed to indicate that the integration of the two domains appears fairly easy.

4. Developments in Finland

The idea of integrating content teaching and language teaching has been brought up in Finland over the past several years. The most consistent spokesman that I know is Mr Jaakko Itälä, a prominent figure in Finnish educational planning and debate. But even Mr Itälä never promoted the idea systematically.

International influences, especially news about the Canadian immersion projects, gave a new impetus to the idea. The Ministry of Education set up a working party in 1987 that submitted its report in 1989 (OPM 1989:47). The working party proposed that more international schools should be set up in Finland and that classes should be set up where instruction is totally or partially in a second/foreign language. It was suggested that such instruction should be available at least in university towns. The group suggested that it would be up to the community to set up such programmes, without need to apply for official permission. Subsequently, most of the group's proposals have been codified in bills passed by the Parliament or statutes issued by the Cabinet.

Another commission, chaired by Professor Christer Laurén, who has championed the immersion approach in Finland, has recently finished its deliberations and is going to submit its recommendations to the Minister of Education in the near future. The commission will make several proposals how to develop language teaching in Finland. If implemented, language teaching in Finland will undergo quite a number of changes, which the committee feels are needed and will definitely make language learning more effective in Finland. At this point, it is possible to say that one of the key recommendations in the unanimous report will be to apply ideas developed in the immersion approach and the content-based lan-

guage teaching approach in Finland. At the moment there are four upper secondary schools that have a programme that leads to the International Baccalaureate and two more schools that will start in the near future.

Another interesting and welcome development is the alternative syllabus that has been prepared for those pupils who are bilingual in Swedish and Finnish.

At the moment, there is only one early immersion program in operation in the city of Vaasa. From the very beginning, close follow-up has been linked with the Vaasa project. We will hear about the project later today. Similar, though not necessarily identical, activity is going in in some schools in Finland: in Turku, Rovaniemi, Mänttä, Jyväskylä etc.

At the upper stage of the comprehensive school the best known is taking place in Soini*. The teacher in that project is working on his Ph.D., thus exemplifying a role that is relatively little known in Finland- the role of the teacher-researcher.

In addition to the projects mentioned in the above, a lot of activity has been initiated: kindergartens and playschools in a foreign language, teachers teaching larger or smaller units in a foreign language, courses for those teachers who are interested in content-based language teaching.

Interest in increasing the use of foreign languages in our schools is growing. It is to be hoped that we will proceeed wisely: organizing training for those interested in content-based language teaching, arranging pilot experiments and utilizing their results effectively, implementing particularly the early programmes in a way that is appropriate and appealing to young children, guaranteeing good co-operation within schools so that the innovations gets full support from all the staff, etc. If we hasten to try the new ideas without proper preparation and proper support, we are bound to meet a lot of problems that might be avoided.

I would like to conclude by saying that, in my opinion, it is not necessary for teachers who are interested in content-based teaching in a foreign language to speak the language of instruction with anything like native-speaker accuracy or fluency. We know that simplified language ("mother-ese", "caretaker talk", "foreigner-talk", "bad/international English") helps language learning and improves comprehension. Native speakers often tend to be more difficult to understand than people who can speak the language with a fair degree of accuracy and fluency. Thus, if a teacher has

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a fair command of a foreign language, learns the language of classroom discourse, and takes the trouble of preparing the lessons carefully in advance, there should be no reason why he or she could not start teaching in a foreign language. My recommendation would be to proceed slowly, beginning with carefully delimited units, and expanding the content coverage over the years.

Another thing I would like to mention is that introducing content-based language teaching is a good opportunity to check one's pedagogical approach. For learning, it is not optimal to have teacher-talk take up most of classtime. Content-based language teaching is a good opportunity to bring into the class, videos, films, reference materials, articles from newspapers, magazines and journals, to initiate co-operative projects with foreign classes using e-mail, etc. The world is full of material that can be used in content-based language teaching. I would recommend that anyone who thinks of introducing content-based language teaching uses the occasion to introduce other pedagogical ideas that have been shown to make learning both more effective and motivating.

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